

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

December 16, 2009

The President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

Thank you for responding to the several letters we have sent you this year regarding a posthumous pardon for Jack Johnson, the first African-American Heavyweight Champion of the World. However, we were sorely disappointed in the response we received from Mr. Ronald L. Rodgers, a pardon attorney for the Department of Justice.

As you may recall, earlier this year the House and the Senate passed a resolution expressing support for a posthumous pardon for Mr. Johnson (S. Con. Res. 29). According to the Congressional Research Service, this is the first time since 1974 that the two chambers have passed a concurrent resolution recommending a posthumous pardon for an individual. We hope you will agree with the Congress and swiftly issue Mr. Johnson a posthumous pardon.

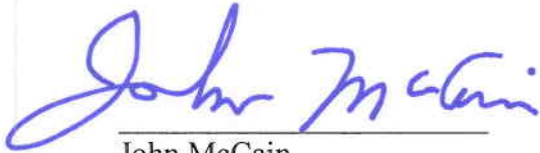
Mr. Rodgers states in his letter that “it is the Department’s position that the limited resources which are available to process requests for Presidential clemency – now being submitted in record numbers – are best dedicated to requests submitted by persons who can truly benefit from a grant of the request.” He also directed us to President Clinton’s remarks when he granted Henry O. Flipper a posthumous pardon in 1999 where President Clinton stated, “But even after his death, this stain of dishonor remained. It has been a trying thing for the family to fight this long battle, to confront delays and bureaucratic indifference...”

We believe these words apply equally to Mr. Johnson’s family. A posthumous pardon would represent a final vindication to Mr. Johnson’s family and to the ignominious stain on our nation’s history, and highlight the achievements of the first African-American Heavyweight Champion of the World.

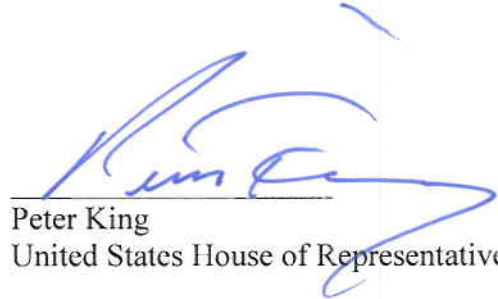
Mr. Johnson’s great-niece told *The New York Post* on April 2, 2009, “For years, our family was deeply ashamed of what happened to our uncle.” She told CNN on April 22, 2009, “I remember seeing his [her uncle’s] picture on the wall of my sixth-grade classroom in Chicago in 1966. It was up there next to pictures of Sojourner Truth and George Washington Carver as part of a black history week my teacher put together. I didn’t have the first clue who the man was. My parents didn’t want me to know.” Mr. Johnson’s conviction was motivated by nothing more than the color of his skin. As such, it not only injured his family, but also our nation as a whole. For these reasons, we do not agree with Mr. Rodgers assertion that a posthumous pardon is not a sound use of the department’s “limited resources.”

Mr. President, in your speech on "A More Perfect Union," you stated that you wanted "to continue the long march of those who came before us, a march for a more just, more equal, more free, more caring and more prosperous America." It is our sincere hope you too will disagree with Mr. Rodger's assessment, concur with Congress and swiftly issue a posthumous pardon for Mr. Johnson, exercising your plenary power to pardon or commute sentences, under Article II, Section 2 of the United States Constitution.

Sincerely,



John McCain
United States Senate



Peter King
United States House of Representatives